

MEMORANDUM

February 9, 2012

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Historic District Commission (HDC)

SUBJECT: HDC Recommendation: HDC2012-00558
Evaluation of Significance for 201 Upton Street

Recommendation by HDC

On December 15, 2011, the subject property was reviewed at the request of the owner, on behalf of a contract purchaser whose intention is to demolish the house and build a new house on the property. The HDC reviewed the information provided by staff, received testimony from twelve speakers, and then closed the public record to deliberate on their Evaluation of Historic Significance.

Upon deliberation, the HDC voted to recommend that the property at 201 Upton Street in Beall's Subdivision be designated as a local historic district through the City's Map Amendment process by rezoning the property from R-60 to R-60 HD on the basis of Criterion I-B (Person), for the significant contributions made by Kermit and Evelyn Mohn to promote accessibility for handicapped individuals in Montgomery County.

Evaluation of Historic Significance by the HDC

The proposed historic district evaluation concerns a single-family residence in the R-60 zone in the West End neighborhood included in Beall's Subdivision. The request for an Evaluation of Historic Significance was brought to the HDC by the property owner, who does not support historic district rezoning, and who requested the HDC evaluation to comply with Zoning Ordinance Sec. 25.14.01.d.1(b), in anticipation of sale of the property and subsequent demolition of the house by the contract purchaser.

The HDC review is restricted to historic significance, and the HDC cannot consider building condition, costs for rehabilitation, or future proposed uses in their deliberation. Such issues may be considered by the Planning Commission and the Mayor and Council, in their consideration of rezoning. If the property is designated as a local historic district, such considerations can be part of the HDC's deliberations of a Certificate of Approval for alterations proposed by the property owner.

Background

The house was constructed between 1939-1944. The Mohns purchased the house in 1959 and lived there until their deaths (Mrs. Mohn died in 1999, and Mr. Mohn died in 2011). Their activism to promote public accommodation for handicapped individuals stemmed from an accident in 1963 that left their younger son paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. Mr. Mohn served on the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities for many years, and was the chair from 1991-1994. He advocated for modifications to public sites and transportation prior to the 1990 enactment of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Discussion by the Historic District Commission

The HDC discussed the alterations to the house, deciding that the property did not meet Rockville's Criteria for significance based on the architecture. The HDC discussed the alterations made to the house to provide handicapped accessibility at the rear and noted that it was unusual to identify such alterations for preservation, which will need to be considered for future additions and/or alterations. The HDC noted that Mr. and Mrs. Mohn made a contribution to the City with their advocacy and made a difference for city residents. The HDC did not recommend designation on the basis of the Mohn's younger son, and artist, Eric Mohn.

Historic District Commission motion

On a motion by Commissioner Achtmeyer, and seconded by Commissioner Reynolds, the Commissions voted 2-1, with Chair Moloney voting against the motion because it included the exterior modifications made for Eric Mohn as significant while the motion identifies only the contributions of Mr. and Mrs. Mohn as historically significant, to recommend historic district designation of the property at 201 Upton Street on the basis of Criterion I-A.

HISTORIC DESIGNATION CRITERIA

I. Historical and cultural significance:

- A. Event: the site of a significant historic event
- B. Person: identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society**
- C. Pattern of Events: exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities
- D. Cultural Value: has character, interest, or value as part of the development, or cultural heritage of the City, County, State, Nation

II. Architectural and design significance:

- A. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction
- B. Represents the work of a master
- C. Possesses high artistic values
- D. Represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction
- E. Represents an established or familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape

Historic Integrity of structure and site:

- A. >Original site and setting largely preserved (lot size, environmental character, trees, setbacks, streetscape)**
- B. Outbuildings present and largely preserved
- C. Original or near original condition (all changes reversible)
- D. >Minor alterations (porch removal or enclosure, roof material replacement, siding added over old siding, basic mass and fenestration pattern intact)**
- E. Substantially Altered (basic shape, original façade, windows /doors have been obscured or changed)

Level of site significance: Local; State; National